

# Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	CHABI Hermann Ghislain
Project Title	Geographic distribution, ethnozoology and commercial value of the crowned crane (Balearica pavonina) in Benin, West Africa
Application ID	39438-1
Date of this Report	25/11/2024

**1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.**

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
OS1: Surveys on geographic distribution, habitat diversity and abundance levels of the crowned crane ( <i>Balearica pavonina</i> ) in Benin, West Africa				Given the highly sensitive security situation in the national parks of northern Benin and the climate of mistrust among the local population, it was very difficult to convince hunters from neighbouring villages to take part in the focus groups.
OS2: Surveys on the ethnozoological and commercial value of the crowned crane ( <i>Balearica pavonina</i> ) in Benin, West Africa				Some participants fear to provide the source forest/areas of specimens recorded in the markets
OS3: Behavior change campaign on the conservation of the crowned crane ( <i>Balearica pavonina</i> ) in Benin, West Africa				This activity has been delayed due to the extension of the field works

**2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.**

- a) LEK-based investigations revealed that *Balearica pavonina* is distributed in national parc (Pendjari and W) and surrounding forest reserves (Alibori supérieur, trois rivières, Okpara, Kika, Guémarou, Sirarou, Gannou) with declining trends over the last two decades.
- b) Local people (89%) perceived hunting and deforestation as the main drivers of declining populations of *Balearica pavonina*. After Benin, most of the specimens recorded in the stalls are from Burkina Faso and Nigeria.
- c) *Balearica pavonina* is a valuable species in the traditional medicine, and in particular for spiritual purposes. The head and feathers are most used organ of the species.

**3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.**

The very sensitive security situation in northern Benin was the major difficulty we encountered during our fieldwork. The local people, especially the hunters, thought we were terrorists. Thanks to the research authorization we had received from the public forestry services and the support of the local authorities, we were able to gain

acceptance in the villages. We thus received easily the free consent of the hunters to organize the focus groups.

The awareness-raising activities coincided with a busy farming season, during which many actors were in the farms. These individuals, often being both hunters and farmers, were not immediately available. We were advised to wait for their return to continue the awareness sessions, and we adjusted our schedule accordingly to maximize their participation as soon as they were available.

#### **4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.**

Local communities played a central role in the success of the project by actively participating in various stages and benefiting both directly and indirectly from its outcomes.

During the data collection phase, hunters, farmers, and sellers from traditional medicine markets were involved. Their in-depth knowledge of local ecosystems, cultural practices, and wildlife species provided crucial information. Furthermore, local leaders and community chiefs helped mobilize key actors, particularly hunters who were also farmers. Their support was critical in overcoming challenges such as participants' mistrust or their availability constraints.

The project also raised awareness among local communities about the importance of conserving *Balearica pavonina* and the impact of their practices on the survival of the species. Open discussions promoted a greater commitment to sustainable practices. Additionally, the students involved in the awareness campaign helped amplify the conservation message by educating their families and sharing information on social platforms such as Facebook, broadening the reach of the project.

The local communities also gained significant benefits from their participation. The awareness sessions increased their knowledge of environmental issues and the long-term benefits of sustainable resource management. The vendors who served as guides in the markets were compensated or recognized for their roles, expanding their networks and influence. Finally, the involvement of local authorities strengthened the communities' trust in the project and provided them with a platform to express their concerns and contribute to solutions tailored to their realities.

In conclusion, the engagement of local communities not only ensured the success of the project but also generated positive outcomes in terms of awareness, recognition, and economic opportunities. This solid collaboration lays the foundation for sustained community involvement in the conservation of *Balearica pavonina*.

#### **5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Yes, it is planned to continue this work, as the conservation of *Balearica pavonina* and the ongoing awareness-raising of local communities are essential to ensure the sustainability of the results achieved. To do this, we plan to undertake several actions.

First, continuous monitoring of populations size in the wild habitats using conventional methods.

Next, the reinforcement of awareness efforts by regularly organizing workshops, information sessions, and discussions, particularly in areas where the species is still poorly known. Strengthening local partnerships is also a key focus. The ongoing

involvement of local authorities, community leaders, and key stakeholders such as hunters, vendors, and farmers is essential to ensure the sustainability of conservation actions for the species. Additionally, we aim to establish partnerships with educational institutions and other local NGOs to strengthen efforts in favor of species preservation.

We also hope to expand conservation and awareness activities to other regions of the country, especially in departments where *Balearica pavonina* is still present, albeit in captivity, to reach a larger number of communities. Finally, we hope to offer local communities sustainable economic alternatives to hunting and illegal trade to reduce the pressures on the *Balearica pavonina* species while improving the living conditions of local populations. By continuing these actions, we will ensure the sustainable conservation of *Balearica pavonina* and engage local communities in a continuous and effective manner.

#### **6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?**

We have designed a comprehensive strategy to share the project results in order to ensure broad dissemination and maximize its impact on the conservation of *Balearica pavonina*. First, a manuscript detailing the results will be submitted to the scientific journal *Global Ecology and Conservation* in 2025, in order to disseminate our findings among large public.

Simultaneously, the results will be published on the PVRN NGO website (<https://www.pvrnong.org/>) via blogs, providing quick and accessible dissemination to a wide audience, including researchers, local stakeholders, and members of civil society involved in conservation. To reach an even broader audience, I will personally share the results at various national events such as National Tree Day, World Biodiversity Day Celebration, Bénin Pastoralists Association Days, as well as at international conferences like the Student Conservation Science Conference and the Ecology-Ecolo'Tech Fair, where oral presentations and posters will be presented. We will also leverage social media to reach a global audience by regularly posting on the PVRN NGO's Facebook and Twitter pages and sharing summaries and articles on conservation-focused blogs.

#### **7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?**

The important and urgent next steps is to shed light on the population size, home range and behavioural ecology of *Balearica pavonina* in the presence forests identified and not under critical security context such as Alibori forest, trois rivières, Okpara, Kika, Guémarou, Sirarou, Gannou)

#### **8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?**

The Rufford Foundation logo was used on our *Balearica pavonina* conservation awareness poster and also on the PVRN NGO website. It will be used in all our future presentations. The Rufford Foundation will also be recognized in planned publications.

#### **9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.**

**TAÏWO Kadjogbé Venceslas:** He contributed to the collection of field data in protected areas, with Hunters, he also worked in close collaboration with the local community

**DJAGOUN Joel:** He contributed to the collection of data on the traditional medicine market.

**ALES Nazif:** He participated in developing awareness materials and taking photos

## 10. Any other comments?

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the Rufford Foundation for its financial support, which made it possible to launch this large-scale project.



Awareness campaign with pupils in the secondary school of Goungoun © **Nazif ALES**



participation of hunters in the focus group in the village of Biro and Bembèrèkè © **Hermann Chabi**



participation of hunters in the focus group in the village of Tounga (malanville) © *Hermann Chabi*



Individuals of *Balearica pavonina* in captive site in malanville © *Hermann Chabi*